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Speeches and Major Press Releases

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Press Releases

U.S. Department of Agriculture • Office of Governmental and Public Affairs

U.S. AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS HIT NEW HIGH IN FISCAL 1980

WASHINGTON, Oct. 30--United States agricultural exports reached a record high of $40.5 billion during fiscal year 1980, according to Thomas R. Hughes, administrator of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service.

Hughes said that the export total for the fiscal year which ended Sept. 30 was up $8.5 billion, or 27 percent, from fiscal year 1979 and record high for the eleventh straight year. At the same time, he noted substantial gains in the export volume for such key items as wheat, feed grains, the soybean complex and cotton.

The figures, released today, show export values increased for all commodity categories. Leading value gainers were cotton, valued at $3 billion, a gain of 59 percent. and grain and feeds, valued at $18.7 billion, 37 percent more than last year.

The volume of wheat and wheat flour exports rose 4.7 million tons to 36.9 million and feed grain exports rose by 11.7 tons to 71.2 million. Soybeans and product shipments increased by 5.0 million tons to 32.2 million. Cotton exports (excluding linters) totaled 9.1 million bales 480 pounds, 48 percent above fiscal 1979.

U.S. Agricultural Exports. Value by Commodity

Commodity	Fiscal Years 1979	1980	Change
	Billion Dollars		*Percent*
Grain & Feeds	13.634	18.671	+37
Oilseeds & Products	8.692	10.017	+15
Animal Products	3.648	3.804	+ 4
Fruits & Vegetables	2.066	2.699	+31
Tobacco	1.292	1.349	+ 4
Cotton & Linters	1.910	3.033	+59
Sugar & Tropical Products	.733	.908	+24
Total	31.975	40.481	+27

(Totals may not add due
to rounding)

Volume of Selected U.S. Agricultural Exports

Commodity	Fiscal Years 1979	Fiscal Years 1980	Change
	Million Metric Tons		*Percent*
Wheat & Flour	32.2	36.9	+15
Feed Grains	59.5	71.2	+20
Soybeans	20.2	23.8	+18
Soybean Oil	1.1	1.2	+15
Soybean Meal	6.0	7.2	+20
	Million Bales		
Cotton (excluding linters)	6.2	9.1	+48

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1981-CROP COTTON LOAN RATES INCREASED

WASHINGTON. Oct. 31--Secretary of Agriculture Bob Bergland today announced the 1981 loan rate will be 52.46 cents per pound for the basic grade of upland cotton, according to a formula established by law. This is 4.46 cents above the 1980 level.

A schedule of premiums and discounts for other qualities and the loan rate for the basic grade at each warehouse will be issued next May, he said.

The basic grade for upland cotton is strict low middling 1-1/16 inch with a micronaire of 3.5 through 4.9, net weight, at average U.S. location.

Bergland also increased the loan rate for 1981 extra long staple cotton by 5.5 cents per pound over the 1980 level. The new rate of 99.0 cents is equal to 55 percent of parity, the same as last year's rate.

The law requires the extra long staple cotton loan rate be set between 185 and 235 percent of the basic upland cotton loan rate. The 1981 extra long staple cotton loan rate is 192 percent of the adjusted 1981 upland cotton loan rate, Bergland said.

Actual loan rates for different qualities of extra long staple cotton will be announced later, he said.

According to Ray Fitzgerald. administrator of USDA's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, there will be no support payments on 1981-crop extra long staple cotton since the loan level provides the statutory minimum support required. This will be the fifth consecutive year that no support payment will be required, he said.

To be eligible for Commodity Credit Corporation loans under this program, an extra long staple cotton producer must comply with the farm's 1981 acreage allotment, Fitzgerald said.

As under the 1980 program, 10-month nonrecourse loans for both upland and extra long staple loans will be available. "Nonrecourse" means the borrower may forfeit the commodity in lieu of paying back the loan money.

Fitzgerald said there would be a 1981 seed cotton loan program similar to that available in 1980, with recourse loans available to borrowers. "Recourse" means borrowers must repay the full dollar amount of the loan, Fitzgerald said.

This program, initiated in 1971 to help producers reduce harvesting, marketing and processing costs, will be offered where Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation state committees determine facilities and conditions make it feasible, he said.

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CORN REACHES SIX-YEAR HIGH GRAIN RESERVE I CALLED

WASHINGTON, Oct. 31--Farmers having corn in farmer-owned grain reserve I will have until February 1981 to repay their loans following call of the reserve today, according to John Goodwin, acting executive vice president of the Commodity Credit Corporation.

Although the reserve has been called, farmers are not required to sell the grain. The call requires them to repay their loans within 90 days of the date they are officially notified of the call. County offices of USDA's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service will officially notify producers whose loans have been called.

The reserve is being called because the national average market price for corn has been above the $3.15 per bushel reserve call level for five consecutive market days. The Oct. 30 five-day average price of $3.26 is the highest received by farmers since September 1974.

"Farmers who have corn in reserve have reaped higher prices because of their participation," Goodwin said. The present national average price of corn is $1 more than the season average for 1978, $1.23 above 1977, and $1.10 more than 1976, he said. "This proves the value of the reserve to farmers, and shows that it is working as intended," he said.

Approximately 560 million bushels (14.2 million metric tons) of corn remain in reserves II and III. These reserves are in release status. Call level for those reserves is $3.26 per bushel.

Under the farmer-owned grain reserve program farmers are eligible to place feed grains and wheat into a reserve during periods of low prices. In return, farmers receive CCC price support loans on the grain in reserve as well as annual storage payments. If prices rise to the "release" level, farmers may repay the loan and market the crop without incurring a penalty. The call level for corn under the reserve I program is 140 percent of the $2.25 per bushel national average loan rate, or $3.15. Data used by the CCC in determining the call level includes a daily report by the Agricultural Marketing Service which shows prices at

selected markets. The markets reviewed by CCC for corn are Chicago, Kansas City, Minneapolis, Omaha and St. Louis.

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USDA SEEKS COMMENTS ON ITS POLICY FOR HANDLING OUTBREAKS OF EXOTIC DISEASE

WASHINGTON, Nov. 3--The U.S. Department of Agriculture is asking the public to comment on its policy for handling birds infected with or exposed to exotic Newcastle disease, a foreign virus disease affecting both pet birds and poultry.

Pierre A. Chaloux, deputy administrator for USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, said current policy was adopted in the spring of 1980 following discussions with representatives of the pet bird and poultry industries.

He said the current policy is that when one or more birds in a group is found to be infected with exotic Newcastle disease through laboratory tests or epidemiological or clinical evidence, the entire group is considered to be infected and is destroyed. The owner is paid indemnities to help compensate for the loss.

Exposed birds are held under quarantine while they are tested. If the tests are negative, the birds are released from quarantine.

"If endangered species are involved, the Department of Interior will be consulted before birds are destroyed," Chaloux said.

Although exotic Newcastle disease affects all birds, it is most devastating in poultry, where it can kill all the birds in infected flocks. Many types of pet birds--particularly those of the parrot family--can become infected without showing signs of the disease. However, they carry the virus and so pose a constant threat of infection to other birds, Chaloux said.

"Destruction of infected birds is the only way to stop the spread of a disease that could devastate the poultry industry and cause serious damage among pet birds," Chaloux said. "The procedures we have established to eradicate breaks of exotic Newcastle disease are designed to provide maximum protection to the poultry and pet bird industries with minimal disruption to owners, producers, dealers and other aviculturists."

These procedures are being used during the current outbreak. which involves more than 30,000 pet birds in 23 states, Chaloux said.

"The most serious outbreak of exotic Newcastle disease on record in the United States occurred in 1971-73 in southern California, when the disease spread from infected pet birds into a dense poultry population," he said. "Nearly 12 million birds--mostly laying hens--had to be destroyed at a cost of $56 million to eradicate the disease."

Chaloux estimates that if exotic Newcastle became established in the United States today, it would cost the poultry industry $400 million a year. Ultimately, these additional costs would be reflected in higher prices at the consumer level.

Comments on USDA's eradication policy should be sent, before Dec. 8 to the deputy administrator, APHIS, USDA, room 748 Federal building, 6505 Belcrest Rd., Hyattsville, Md. 20782.

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BLUETONGUE SURVEILLANCE ZONE ESTABLISHED IN 22 STATES TO SUPPORT CATTLE EXPORTS

WASHINGTON, Nov. 4--Regular surveys began yesterday in 22 states to detect cattle infected with bluetongue disease, a U.S. Department of Agriculture veterinarian said.

The surveillance zone extends roughly from Montana east to Michigan and includes all states north and east of Indiana and Kentucky, said Pierre A. Chaloux, deputy administrator of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. This area was verified free of established bluetongue by a nationwide survey in 1978.

"If we want to preserve our cattle export markets, we must regularly verify that U.S. cattle for export are not infected with bluetongue," Chaloux said. "Australia, New Zealand, and a number of European countries already have closed their borders to U.S. cattle because of bluetongue."

Bluetongue is a virus disease of ruminants. It is particularly damaging in sheep--up to half of the sheep that get the disease die in the United States. Symptoms in cattle include lesions on the feet and mouth, but frequently cattle do not show any of the signs of bluetongue seen in sheep. This was true for example, in a bluetongue outbreak among cattle in Mississippi in 1979, Chaloux said.

"We don't expect to find problems with bluetongue in the surveillance zone," Chaloux said, "because the tiny biting insects that spread the disease virus seldom carry it in colder climates."

Animals normally do not spread bluetongue directly to other animals.

Chaloux said the bluetongue survey will be repeated annually. It is based on results from tests done on blood samples taken from cattle at slaughtering plants. Only blood from cattle originating in the surveillance zone will be tested.

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FOOD COSTS RISE LESS IN SEPTEMBER THAN IN AUGUST

HYATTSVILLE, Md., Nov. 5--It's costing more to feed a family of four at home for a week, even when you're thrifty. To be stastically exact, the price was 50 cents higher in September than in August.

That's 20 cents less than the 70-cent inerease from July to August, say home economists with the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The home economists, who keep track of food costs at the USDA's Consumer Nutrition Center of the Science and Education Administration, said the thrifty plan is the least costly of four plans designed for people buying food under different circumstances.

Using the "thrifty plan," the cost of feeding a family of four at home for a week rose from $53.20 in August to $53.70 in September, up from $52.50 in July.

The "liberal" plan--most expensive of the four--cost $103.90 in September. In August, the figure was $102.70. It was $101.10 in July.

These plans may be used as guides for estimating food needs and costs for families of different sizes. They are used by teachers, home economists and others who help families plan nutritious and satisfying meals for the money they can spend, said the home economists.

The thrifty plan contains less milk, meat, vegetables and fruit but more legumes, cereal, flour and bread than the other plans. Families on a low-cost plan usually need to select the lower cost foods within food groups. For example, they may choose ground beef rather than, steak and bread instead of fancy rolls. Here are the costs of eating at home for a week during September, 1980:

	Thrifty Plan	Low-Cost Plan	Moderate-Cost Plan	Liberal Plan
FAMILIES				
Young couple	$31.60	41.00	$51.50	$61.70
Elderly couple	28.40	36.60	45.30	54.00
Family of 4 with preschool children	44.60	57.30	71.50	85.60
Family of 4 with elementary school children	33.70	69.20	86.00	103.90
INDIVIDUALS*				
Females				
12-19 years of age	13.20	16.80	20.80	24.90
20-54 years	12.90	16.70	20.80	24.80
55 years and over	11.70	15.10	18.60	22.00
Males				
12-14 years of age	14.80	18.80	23.60	28.20
15-19 years	16.30	20.80	26.10	31.40
20-54 years	15.80	20.60	26.00	31.3
55 years and over	14.10	18.20	22.60	27.10
Children				
1-2 years of age	7.20	9.10	11.20	13.30
3-5 years	8.70	10.90	13.50	16.20
6-8 years	11.10	14.20	17.70	21.20
9-11 years	13.90	17.70	22.20	26.60

*You can figure out the price of feeding a family of any size by adding up the costs for each member of the family as follows:

-- For those eating all meals at home (or carrying some meals from home), use the amounts shown.

-- For those eating some meals out, deduct 5 percent from the amount in the table for each meal not eaten at home. Thus, for a person eating lunch out 5 days a week, subtract 25 percent or one-fourth the cost shown.

-- For guests, include for each meal eaten, 5 percent of the amount shown for the proper age group.

Next, adjust the total figure if more or fewer than 4 people generally eat at the family table. Costs shown are for individuals in 4-

person families. Adjustment is necessary because larger families tend to buy and use foods more economically than smaller ones.

Thus, for a 1-person family, add 20 percent; for 2 persons, add 10 percent; 3, add 5 percent; 4, use as is; 5 or 6, subtract 5 percent; 7 or more, subtract 10 percent.

Each of the food plans contains food to provide a nutritious diet for the individual or family specified, say the USDA home economists. The plans reflect buying practices of families who spend different amounts of money for food. For example, the thrifty plan (used in setting the coupon allotment in the food stamp program) is for families with little money for food.

Other plans are for people with bigger food budgets.

For details on how the plans are calculated, write to the Consumer Nutrition Center, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Hyattsville, Md. 20782.

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USDA SAYS THREAT TO U.S. POULTRY--POSED BY EXOTIC NEWCASTLE DISEASE--ELIMINATED

WASHINGTON, Nov. 6--The threat to the U.S. poultry industry posed by the most recent outbreak of exotic Newcastle disease in cage birds appears to have been eliminated, a U.S. Department of Agriculture veterinarian said today.

"We feel that we've found all the infected birds," said Jerry Mason, who coordinated the national program to eradicate this foreign bird disease. "However, suspicious symptoms at a few aviaries and pet shops are still being checked.

"We were forced to destroy some 30,000 exotic cage birds at more than 550 locations in 45 states--and spend more than $2.8 million--but it was worth it," he said.

"USDA estimates that exotic Newcastle disease would cost the poultry industry $400 million annually, if it became established in the United States. This cost would be passed on to consumers as higher poultry and egg prices," he said. A 1971-73 outbreak in southern California caused the death or destruction of 12 million laying hens and cost $56 million to eradicate.

The disease was first detected at a Miami, Fla., cage bird wholesale facility Sept. 10. Veterinarians traced bird shipments from Miami to 44 other states, Mason said. The disease was disgnosed on 61 premises in 23 of those states: Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Kansas, Louisiana, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, Oregon, Texas, Vermont, Washington, West Virginia and New Jersey.

To fight the outbreak, USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service activated--for the first time--all five of its regional emergency task forces, Mason said. USDA and cooperating state veterinarians worked from temporary headquarters in Miami, Fla.; Topeka, Kans.; Hyattsville, Md.; Santa Ana, Calif.; and Houston, Texas, to locate all infected and exposed birds.

Birds shipped from the infected facilities were killed and specimens submitted to USDA's national veterinary services laboratories at Ames,

Iowa, for testing. Swab samples taken from exposed birds were also submitted to the laboratories.

This procedure made it possible to destroy only those birds from facilities that tested positive. All birds in a pet shop were killed only in those 61 instances when the disease agent was diagnosed on the premises.

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